

## Local Policy related to the Skill Attainment System

The Durham Local Area, as required by state policy, has created a local system for identifying and tracking Skill Attainments. In this toolkit, you will find local policy, procedures and tools that will be used by all youth service providers throughout the region.

The policy, procedures, and tools were developed with four intents:

1. To meet the **requirements for tracking performance** of younger youth (ages 14 – 18) under the Younger Youth Skill Attainment performance measure.
2. To have **standardized and consistent assessment practices and tools** across all youth services within the region.
3. To incorporate **quality assessment and program design practices** within all youth services throughout the region.
4. To enhance **options for customized service planning** which meets the needs and wants of young people in our youth services.

As a general policy, and without exception, the Durham Local Area will:

- Apply the policy, procedures, and tools found in this benchmarking system to **all young people regardless of age or program provider**.
- Utilize **Workforce Plus to track services and outcomes for all youth** in addition to documenting performance for the Younger Youth Skill Attainment Performance Measure.

# Design Elements for the Benchmarking System

In order to have a documentable, competency-based outcome system, local benchmarking should be designed around elements which include measurable goals, assessment of the customer's entry skill level, development of an individualized training plan, provision of appropriate training services, attention to documentation, and final assessment of skill level. These seven design elements are also in alignment with the State Policy for local system design.

This benchmarking system has been designed around seven basic elements:

## **1. Learning Objectives**

The learning objectives are outcome statements that describe the skill to be taught, the level to be achieved, and the means of measurement.

## **2. Entry Assessment**

The entry assessment is an investigation of the customer's skill level at the time of registration, used to determine and document what the customer can already do and what he/she needs to learn. The entry assessment must clearly identify the tools/criteria to be used in determining the customer's skill levels. This information is then utilized to determine the most appropriate training plan for the customer.

## **3. Skill Attainment Definition**

The definition of a skill attainment will clearly articulate what the customer must achieve in order to take a skills attainment outcome. The outcomes are to be intermediate benchmarks which ordinarily would take between 6 and 12 months to accomplish.

## **4. Identified Goal and Training Plan**

A goal indicating the customer is in need of the training services and an individual training plan must be clearly identified prior to the customer receiving services. The goal must be articulated on a formal, written document where both the customer and the Service Providers understand and agree to work toward attainment of the goal.

## **5. Training Curricula and Methods**

Curricula and instructional strategies will be developed by the training agency or worksite to meet the needs and goals identified in the service plan.

## **6. Final Assessment**

Customer assessment, both during and following training, is completed to measure performance and skill levels against specified outcomes and to determine the amount of progress he/she is making in achieving the goals set out in the training plan.

## **7. Documentation**

A series of documentation is required to record customer progress and achievement of benchmarks.

## SCANS as a Framework

To further the development of soft skills and the integration of learning events which allow for contextual learning, the Northwest Piedmont Local Area has chosen use the SCANS as a framework for defining the benchmarking system. The SCANS definitions that apply are:

### *Foundation Skills:*

**Reading:** Locates, understands, and interprets written information in prose and written documents, including manuals, graphs, and schedules, to perform tasks; learns from text by determining the main idea or essential messages; identifies relevant details, facts, and specifications; infers or locates the meaning of unknown or technical vocabulary; judges the accuracy, appropriateness, style, and plausibility of reports, proposals, or theories of other writers.

**Math:** Performs basic computations; uses numerical concepts such as whole numbers and percentages in practical situations; makes reasonable estimates of arithmetic results with a calculator; uses tables, graphs, diagrams, and charts to obtain or convey quantitative information, approaches practical problems by choosing appropriately from a variety of mathematical techniques, uses quantitative data to construct logical explanations for real world situations; expresses mathematical ideas and concepts orally and in writing; and understands the role of chance in the occurrence and prediction of events.

### *Resource Competencies:*

**Allocates Time:** Selects relevant, goal-related activities, ranks them in order of importance, allocates time to activities, and understands, prepares and follows schedules.

**Allocates Money:** Uses or prepares budgets, including making cost and revenue forecasts, keeps detailed records to track budget performance, and makes appropriate adjustments.

**Allocates Materials and Facilities:** Acquires, stores, and distributes materials, supplies, parts, equipment, space, or final products in order to make best use of them.

**Allocates Human Resources:** Assesses knowledge and skills and distributes work accordingly, evaluates performance and provides feedback.

### *Interpersonal Competencies:*

**Participates as Member of a Team:** Works cooperatively with others and contributes to group with ideas, suggestions, and effort.

**Teaches Others New Skills:** Helps others learn.

**Serves Client/Customer:** Works and communicates with clients and customers to satisfy their expectations.

**Exercises Leadership:** Communicates thoughts, feelings, and ideas to justify position; encourages, persuades, or otherwise motivates an individual or group, including responsibly challenging existing procedures, policies or authority; assumes responsibility for project/task completion.

**Negotiates:** Works toward agreements that may involve exchanging specific resources or resolving divergent interests.

**Works with Diversity:** Works well with men and women from a variety of ethnic, social, or educational backgrounds.

### *Information Competencies:*

**Acquires and Evaluates Information:** Identifies need for data, obtains it from existing sources or creates it, and evaluates its relevance and accuracy.

**Organizes and Maintains Information:** Organizes, processes, and maintains written or computerized records and other forms of information in a systematic fashion.

**Interprets and Communicates Information:** Selects and analyzes information and communicates the results to others using oral, written, graphic, pictorial, or multi-media methods.

**Uses Computer to Process Information:** Employs computer to acquire, organize, analyze, and communicate information.

### *Systems Competencies:*

**Understands Systems:** Knows how social, organizational, and technological systems work and operates effectively with them.

**Monitors and Corrects Performance:** Distinguishes trends, predicts impact of actions on system operations, diagnoses deviations in the function of a system/organization, and takes necessary action to correct performance.

**Improves or Designs Systems:** Makes suggestions to modify existing systems to improve products or services, and develops new or alternative systems.

### *Technology Competencies:*

**Selects Technology:** Judges which set of procedures, tools or equipment including computers, phones, service delivery and related technologies, will produce the desired results.

**Applies Technology to Task:** Understands overall intent and proper procedures for setting up and operating equipment.

**Maintains and Troubleshoots Equipment:** Prevents, identifies, or solves problems with equipment, including computers and other technologies.

### *Thinking Skills*

**Creative Thinking:** Generates new ideas by making nonlinear or unusual connections, changing or reshaping goals, and imagining new possibilities; uses imagination freely, combining ideas or information in new ways, making connections between seemingly unrelated ideas, and reshaping goals in ways that reveal new possibilities.

**Decision Making:** Specifies goals and constraints, generates alternatives, considers risks, and evaluates and chooses best alternatives.

**Problem Solving:** Recognizes that a problem exists (i.e., that there is a discrepancy between what is and what should be); identifies possible reasons for the discrepancy, and devises and implements a plan of action to resolve it; evaluates and monitors progress, revising the plan as indicated by findings.

**Mental Visualization:** Sees things in the mind's eye by organizing and processing symbols, pictures, graphs, objects, or other information; for example, sees a building from a blueprint, a system's operation from schematics, the flow of work activities from narrative descriptions, or the taste of food from reading a recipe.

**Knowing How to Learn:** Recognizes and can use learning techniques to apply and adapt existing and new knowledge and skills in both familiar and changing situations; is aware of learning tools such as personal learning styles (visual, aural, etc.), formal learning strategies (note taking or

clustering items that share some characteristics), and informal learning strategies.

**Reasoning:** Discovers a rule or principle underlying the relationship between two or more objects and applies it in solving a problem; for example, uses logic to draw conclusions from available information, extracts rules or principles from a set of objects or a written text, or applies rules and principles to a new situation (or determines which conclusions are correct when given a set of facts and conclusions).

### ***Personal Qualities:***

**Responsibility:** Exerts a high level of effort and perseverance toward goal attainment; works hard to become excellent at doing tasks by setting high standards, paying attention to details, working well even when assigned an unpleasant task, and displaying a high level of concentration; displays high standards of attendance punctuality, enthusiasm, vitality, and optimism in approaching and completing tasks.

**Self-Esteem:** Believes in own self-worth and maintains a positive view of self; demonstrates knowledge of own skills and abilities; is aware of one's impression on others; knows own emotional capacity and needs and how to address them.

**Sociability:** Demonstrates understanding, friendliness, adaptability, empathy, and politeness in new and ongoing group settings; asserts self in familiar and unfamiliar social situations; relates well to others; responds appropriately as the situation requires; takes an interest in what others say and do.

**Self-Management:** Accurately assesses own knowledge, skills, and abilities; sets well-defined and realistic personal goals; monitors progress toward goal attainment and motivates self through goal achievement; exhibits self-control and responds to feedback unemotionally and non-defensively.

**Integrity/Honesty:** Recognizes when being faced with making a decision or exhibiting behavior that may break with commonly held personal or societal values; understands the effects of violating these beliefs and codes on an organization, oneself, and others; chooses an ethical course of action.